



*Maj. Timothy Kirby and Maj. Danny Frieden reassemble their M4 carbine rifles as part of the timed weapons event at the 406th Army Field Support Brigade's third annual Brigade Logistics Support Team Olympics at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in April 2015. (Photo by Veronica Reid)*

## The BLST's Role in the Materiel Enterprise

Brigade logistics support teams provide direct support to the warfighter by integrating Army Materiel Command capabilities into brigade operations.

■ By Maj. Centrell A. Jones

As the Army's materiel provider and sustainment powerhouse, the Army Materiel Command (AMC) provides military forces with strategic-level capabilities all over the world. AMC provides acquisition, logistics, and technology (ALT) support to brigade combat teams (BCTs) and combat aviation brigades (CABs). Four two-

star commands manage AMC's robust life cycle management capabilities to support Army and joint forces.

The brigade logistics support team (BLST) is AMC's unit for direct support to the warfighter. It leverages and integrates AMC capabilities into brigade operations throughout the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle. The BLST also in-

tegrates and synchronizes ALT into brigade operations while deployed and at home station.

### The Sustainment Power Chain

The materiel enterprise provides the equipment that brigades need to conduct operations and mission command. AMC's major subordinate commands provide equipment,

supply parts, and maintenance support throughout the useful life of the equipment. AMC has four life cycle management commands (LCMCs) and more than 70 logistics readiness centers, formerly called directorates of logistics.

Each LCMC has a role in fielding and supporting the brigades' weapons, tracked and wheeled vehicles, aviation systems, and communication systems in preparation for war-time missions. The LCMCs include the Joint Munitions and Lethality LCMC, the TACOM LCMC, the Communications-Electronics Command, and the Aviation and Missile Command (AMCOM).

The Army Sustainment Command (ASC), a two-star AMC command, sustains Army and joint forces worldwide through mission command of its Army field support brigades (AFSBs) and their subordinate Army field support battalions (AFSBns).

The AFSBs and AFSBns ensure AMC's logistics tasks are streamlined and that unity of effort is achieved throughout the assigned area of responsibility. Both organizations exercise mission command of the majority of LCMC assets.

The materiel enterprise has grown tremendously over the past forty years as practices and processes have improved. Because of AMC's growth to keep pace with Army transformation, the AFSB was created to ensure full integration of ALT.

## The BLST

The lowest echelon of support in the materiel enterprise is the BLST. It is assigned to an AFSBn and provides direct support to BCTs and CABs. The BLST exists not to replicate existing logistics capabilities but to augment the capabilities of the brigade that it habitually supports.

The BLST concept began in 2005 when AMC shifted from the logistics support element's division-centric approach to a modular support concept centered on the Stryker brigade combat teams (SBCTs). In this con-

cept, a logistics support element provided direct support to each SBCT.

A similar concept developed as early as 2003 put emphasis on a logistics support team (LST) comprising the SBCT's organic personnel as a single point of contact forward. The LST was designed to provide maintenance support forward with reachback capability. The LST's primary focus

its associated training tasks. The BLST often supports new equipment training. The LARs are trained on all new equipment and provide technical support to fill Soldiers' training gaps.

The BLST provides an invaluable link to the strategic level of logistics as far back as the national level in order to resolve supply issues. The

The BLST can communicate capability gaps to various entities of the materiel enterprise and continue its direct support mission throughout a deployment.

was to interface with supported units and maintain the SBCT's equipment using Soldiers and contracted technicians. Today, the BLSTs bear these tasks as part of their mission.

The BLST's direct support role relieves the brigade's tactically focused logisticians from having to leverage AMC's robust enterprise. The BLST is responsible for managing all AMC activities and logistics assistance in the combat, field, and garrison environments. The team is tailored to support the CAB and armored, light, or Stryker BCTs and is scalable to meet the demands of an expeditionary environment.

The AFSBn provides mission command of the BLST and the logistics assistance representatives (LARs) who are on loan from the LCMCs. LCMCs deploy LARs on six-month rotations to support troops in combat. The BLST comprises the LARs, an Army major as the BLST chief, and a logistics management specialist as the operations officer. The LARs and logistics management specialist are Department of the Army civilians and must stay prepared to deploy.

The BLST assists the brigades with fielding equipment. Fielding can be cumbersome with all of

BLST can access logistics personnel and managers of materiel in multiple organizations at varying echelons, such as the program or product managers (PMs), item managers, the Defense Logistics Agency, manufacturers, and the LCMCs, either to expedite a critical class IX (repair parts) item or to be updated on its status.

Another asset is the senior systems technical representative that AMCOM assigns to each CAB. The representative educates the BLST chief and has aviation maintenance expertise that is integral to responsive logistics support.

The warfighter needs a strategic capabilities integrator at the tactical level to ensure forces are trained and equipped to dominate on land. Equipment readiness hinges on the BLST's ability to integrate capabilities during the ARFORGEN cycle.

Moreover, the BLST enables the brigade's readiness through timely integration of materiel enterprise capabilities and logistics support. Logistics support starts with a proper reset. In the train/ready pool, the BLST provides direct support for field training events, combat training center rotations, and daily maintenance operations.



## ALT Support

ALT is integral to successful brigade training and mission performance during the ARFORGEN cycle. ALT missions include but are not limited to materiel fielding, program executive office or PM sustainment support, test and evaluation of equipment in the field, software training and installation, and science and technology.

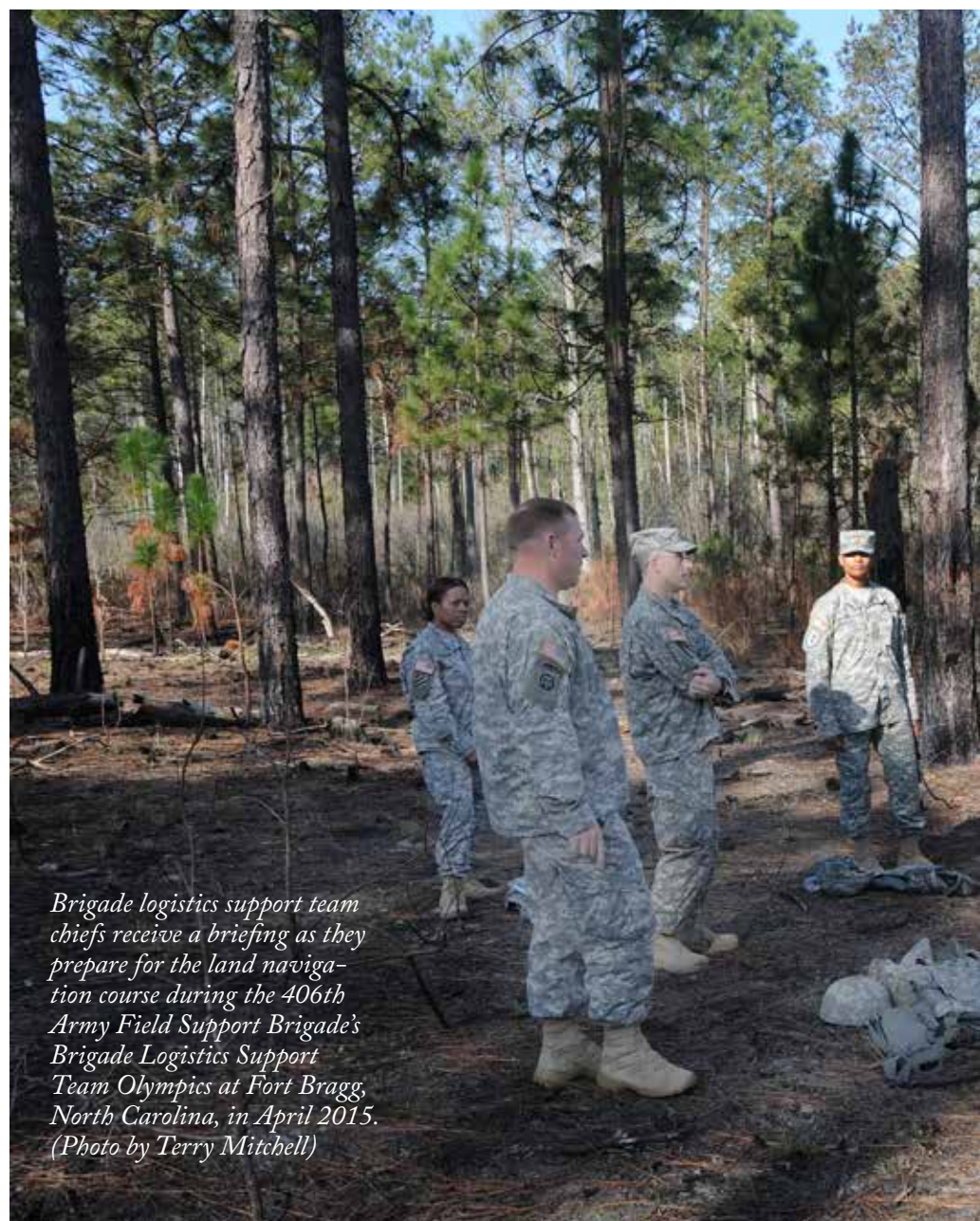
The AFSB plans and synchronizes all ALT actions with the supported units in its area of responsibility and ensures follow-on sustainment support is provided. Critical ALT responsibilities of the BLST are to provide analysis of capability gaps, support the fielding of newly acquired combat systems, and provide supply and maintenance support throughout the system's useful life.

## Preparing for Readiness

A number of factors influence a BLST's impact on readiness. These include the brigade commander's training priorities and the availability and operational status of equipment needed to train. As the brigade approaches being in the available pool of ARFORGEN, its equipment becomes a priority. The BLST must prioritize requirements in order to mitigate maintenance readiness problems and equipment shortfalls.

The BLST can reach back to the AFSBn, predeployment training equipment yards, ASC supply LARs, and the Defense Logistics Agency for required parts, components, and missing equipment. The BLST tries to minimize not-mission-capable time by expediting requisitions, finding alternate vendors, installing maintenance rebuilds, and fabricating parts. When the brigade is tasked with a new mission, appropriate steps must be taken to understand the problem; the BLST gets involved up front.

The military decisionmaking process (MDMP) is probably not readily associated with the BLST. However, the team often has mis-



*Brigade logistics support team chiefs receive a briefing as they prepare for the land navigation course during the 406th Army Field Support Brigade's Brigade Logistics Support Team Olympics at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in April 2015. (Photo by Terry Mitchell)*

sions that require analysis. The process starts with knowing what is available to the brigade from a strategic standpoint.

For example, the CAB is often tasked with disaster relief support missions. The BLST's job is to identify sustainment maintenance capabilities that can be used to support the airframes and ensure cargo utility, electronics, and avionics LARs are deployed to assist the aviation unit maintenance technicians. The BLST identifies all available support and any limitations that affect

the mission.

The BLST's role is to improve the brigade commander's operational reach. For example, the aviation classification repair activity depot (AVCRAD) is an Army National Guard unit that AMCOM can leverage to support the CAB's airframes no matter where in the world they deploy.

While in the continental United States, the AVCRAD capabilities are assigned to the state's adjutant general. While deployed, the AVCRAD is task-organized





under AMCOM and becomes the theater aviation sustainment maintenance group that supports the theater aviation maintenance program. The BLST gets strategic capabilities to the right place at the right time; it starts with planning and participating in the MDMP as early in the process as possible.

Another key function of logistics planning or logistics preparation of the operational environment involves building a knowledge base of materiel enterprise capabilities in the continental United States and

abroad. The BLST must know the capabilities of each LCMC, the logistics readiness center, the AFSB contractors, and the key individuals responsible for managing the delivery of the capabilities.

Planning includes communicating with key LCMC personnel who know which LARs are available and can direct the LARs to support deployments and major training events. Senior command representatives (SCRs) or the logistics assistance directorate regional manager (LRM) of each LCMC will work

with the BLST to determine personnel availability and ensure technical support is in place for all critical systems in the brigade. Each LCMC has a senior technician on the installation who communicates requirements to the SCR or LRM.

Forecasting of major training events and communicating with the SCR and LRM is essential for timely integration and synchronization of materiel enterprise capabilities into brigade operations when at home station, at a combat training center, and deployed.

### **Working Together**

The BLST has the advantage of having a rapport with the brigade's leaders and understanding the commander's intent, priorities, and vision. The BLST can communicate capability gaps to various entities of the materiel enterprise and continue its direct support mission throughout a deployment. Getting the warfighters what they need, when they need it, is an ever-present challenge, and BLST involvement is essential.

Supply chain management is influenced in a couple of ways. Authorized stockage list (ASL) items are vital to the brigade's ability to ensure the right parts or components of end items are stocked to maintain critical systems. Challenges will occur with maintaining critical systems. AMC has an expert ASL team that can perform demand analysis for equipment and further identify the parts required for stock in the brigade's supply support activity.

Performance-based logistics (PBL) was introduced almost a decade ago as an effective tool to influence readiness through predictive analysis. PBL is geared toward PM efforts to manage life cycle costs while balancing supply system performance and equipment readiness. The PM is responsible for the contractor logistics support that enlists industry to provide successful support for a given system.

All BLSTs should share information with other BLSTs. It is helpful for the

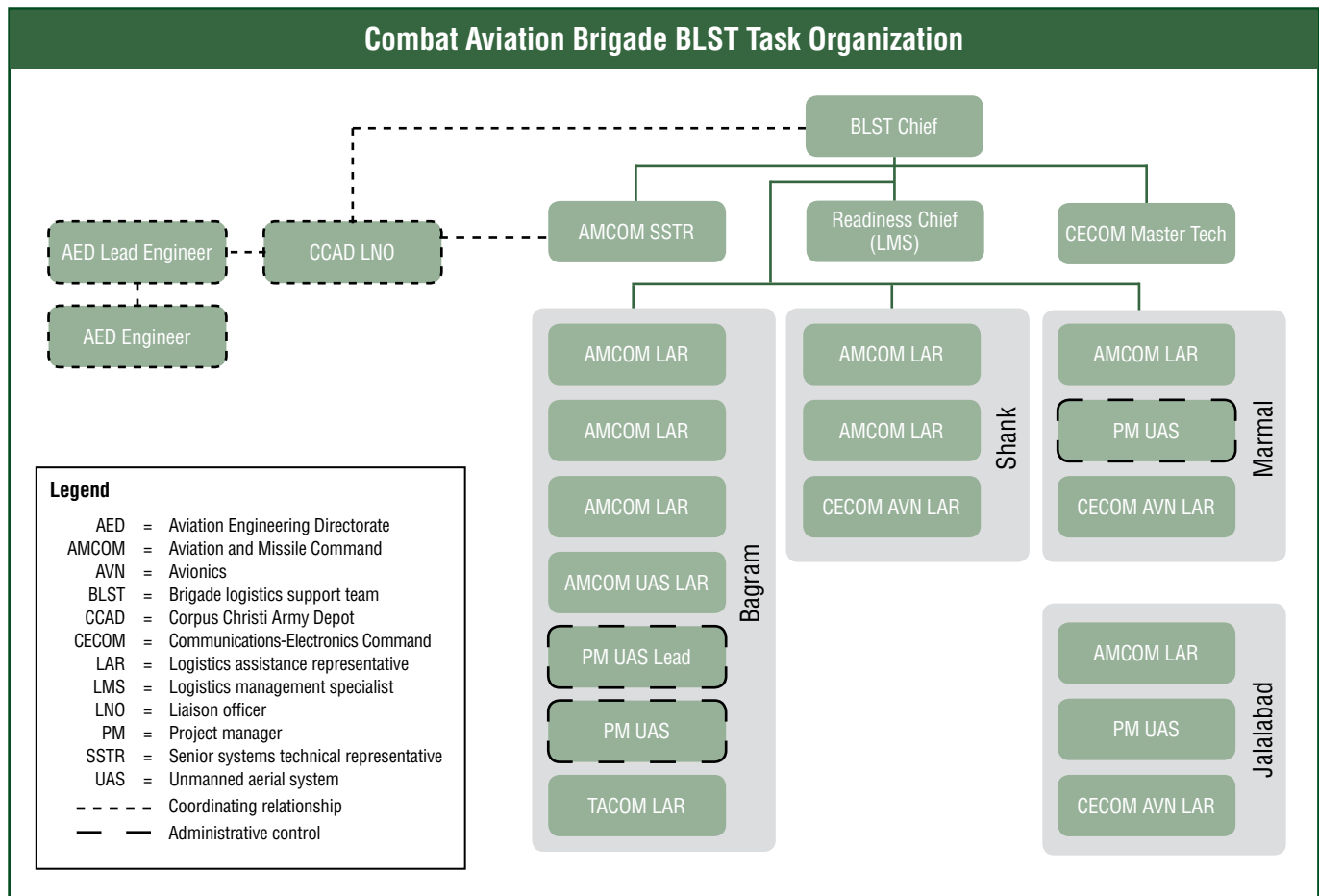


Figure 1. Organizational chart of a deployed brigade logistics support team of a combat aviation brigade. The team typically comprises about 10 personnel; however, the size varies and depends on the number and locations of the combat aviation brigade's aircraft.

BLST to know which AMC managers can mitigate supply problems associated with both home-station and deployed ASL- or PBL-supported systems. Other BLSTs may experience the same challenges; sharing products, solutions, and experience could alleviate problems.

Sometimes unique readiness challenges develop. Supply shortages arise because the acquisition advice code for some equipment designates it as not stocked. The LCMCs work to competitively procure parts or components, and contracts must be awarded, which can add to the lead time.

The BLST must communicate with the PM and item manager of the affected system to identify the solution and time line required to bring equipment to fully mission ca-

pable status. The results of that communication must be shared with the brigade so that it knows why there is a lag or problem and when to expect a resolution. The brigade's maintenance personnel and leaders should also know if there is something they can do to fix the problem.

The BLST must be the honest broker and tell the brigade's leaders that the readiness challenge could be mitigated if the systems are properly maintained. Preventive maintenance checks and services, inventories, and placing all shortages on order are vital; all of these tasks are associated with a proper reset.

Some systems are critical to the brigade's mission while deployed; these systems must be fully mission capable for personnel to train on or operate. If the brigade encounters an

issue that affects its ability to train or that hinders combat readiness, the BLST must elevate the issue and reach back to AMC's resources to find a solution.

The readiness challenges shared with other BLSTs allows other CABs or BCTs to get out in front of potential issues before they become larger problems. Information is empowering, but sharing it is what matters.

### Observations and Insights

BLSTs should consistently reeducate themselves. Once a certain degree of comfort is gained, reeducation is key because the logistics common operational picture on day one of an assignment will not likely be the same on day 180.

All AFSBns are likely to have



an initiation process to introduce all new BLST chiefs to AMC and key LCMC senior managers or supervisors. Installation sustainment and logistics terrain walks must be a part of the introduction so that the BLST chief is familiar with installation facilities and capabilities, such as the installation maintenance division, installation supply division, aviation logistics maintenance division, and the pollution prevention operations center, to name a few.

The ASC and the LCMCs often have technicians or supply support personnel who are not part of the BLST but are permanent party on the installation and are available in an area or regional support role.

Field service representatives, both Army civilian and contracted individuals, are provided office space in facilities that the AFSBns manage. Their sole purpose is to support the brigade's ability to shoot, move, and communicate. For example, the Communications-Electronics Command has digital systems engineers and a training support division that are responsible for supporting the brigades, sometimes on a regional basis.

The BLST should meet all field service representatives and LARs and understand their roles and the types of equipment they can support, either contractually, by memorandum of agreement, or according to doctrine. The BLST may not have the organic capability to support all equipment, but knowing where to go makes a difference.

BLSTs need to educate the brigade's leaders. They should build a capabilities brief that describes AMC's mission, its major subordinate commands, and the BLST's mission, role, and responsibilities. The brief should be tailored to build awareness of how the BLST supports the brigade throughout the ARFORGEN cycle.

All capabilities that support the brigade in the available pool should include ALT support while deployed. The train/ready pool inte-

grates the commander's training guidance and priorities with the AMC assets as enablers. The BLST will inform the brigade about the reset time line and training requirements associated with reset during and following deployment.

BLSTs need to get involved and stay involved. Logistics provides the maneuver commanders with options, and logisticians should provide AMC national-level provider options to their supported commanders.

BLSTs should get to know the brigade executive officer, S-3, S-4, and support operations officer because they are leading the MDMP process, planning logistics, and executing logistics functions. BLSTs should ensure they account for AMC capabilities up front.

Since one of the brigade's primary mission essential tasks involves mission command, a good rapport with the brigade S-6 is important so that the commander's systems function reliably and personnel are trained to operate them. Brigade executive officers who understand BLST capabilities can steer the staff and battalion executive officers to support readiness efforts if necessary.

Being involved eases the friction associated with communication flow and helps the BLST to stay informed. Being involved does not mean that they have to attend every meeting. The BLST members should gauge when and where their time can be best used for the most impact.

BLST chiefs need to understand their bosses. In doing so, they will better understand their deliverables to the bosses. All BLSTs have the responsibility to tell supported commanders what AMC assets are available and which AMC players can leverage capabilities of the materiel enterprise. The BLST chief should be someone who can become a part of both the AMC team and the warfighting team, whether it is a CAB or a BCT.

The BLST must strike a balance among the requests, priorities, and

expectations of the AFSBn, AFSB, BSB, CAB, and BCT commanders. Is the BLST likely to have a direct relationship with the BCT or CAB commander? Probably not, but that commander should know the BLST and what it does. Most of the BLST's time will be spent with the support battalion commander and brigade primary staff.

The sustainment of combat operations is the result of hundreds of people working at multiple echelons. Effective unified land or air operations would not be possible without having all levels of logistics integrated to support the warfighter.

The BLST is a combat enabler that is relevant for Army forces now through 2025 and beyond. Logistics is a key component of Army capability that leads to force domination on land. AMC support delivered to the warfighter has to be nested with the brigade commander's priorities and intent; this requires the involvement of a field-grade officer in a direct support role.

Interfacing with brigade maintenance technicians and staff, understanding brigade readiness challenges, being present and involved, knowing about major training events down to the battalion level, and educating primary staff at the brigade and battalion levels are all part of BLST responsibilities. The BLST has the ability to leverage strategic logistics capabilities not easily accessible to the brigade and is a relevant, trained, and ready force multiplier.

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